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Trashing the truth

Now that the quadrennial orgy of wholesale deceit known as a presidential election is over, Americans can get back to their real business, which is lying to each other retail. An extraordinary portion of the gross domestic product is currently devoted to deception in one form or another, concealed though it may be as marketing, advertising, management, leadership seminars, news, entertainment, politics, public relations, religion, psychic hotlines, education, ab machine infomercials, and the law.

We have become a nation of poseurs, hustlers, and charlatans, increasingly choosing attitude over action or presentation over performance or becoming unable to tell the difference. It has gotten to the point that the main difference between the stars of *Melrose Place* and the news stars of MSNBC is that the latter keep their clothes on.

It's not all that surprising because, whether for pleasure, profit or promotion, and in ways subtle and direct, our society encourages and rewards those who out-sell, out-argue, and out-maneuver those around them -- with decreasing concern for any harm caused along the way. As they say in Hollywood, the most important thing is sincerity. Once you've learned how to fake that, the rest is easy.

The Clintons are merely among the most prominent, egregious, and promiscuous of the breed. There's Hillary who has lived with such malice aforethought that she had her college thesis put under lock and key before launching her political career. And there's her husband who, it has been said in his home state, would quickly turn green were he to recline upon a pool table.

But while Clinton may be the Dr. Kervorkian of the right-to-lie movement, he is far from alone. One reason the media and the public is having such a hard time figuring out what the First Fraud and his wife have done wrong, is that so many Americans are no longer certain of what *wrong* is. Or even if there is something that can with any certainty be called *wrong* anymore.

A strange schizophrenia has crept into everyday life and language that, even without the help of Michael McCurry, is creating a growing disjunction between words and what was once their meaning.

For example, Geraldo Rivera came to town last month in an attempt to pacify blacks angry about his aggressive belief that O. J. Simpson is guilty. An edition of his show, *Rivera Live,* was broadcast from a local church. One of those on the panel, black activist Malik Shabazz, urged people not to vote in the presidential election. Responded Tavis Smiley of Black Entertainment Television: "I will never sit on stage with a black man telling people not to vote." Several dozen people stood up and applauded.

There are two interesting things about this story: First, Smiley never left the stage and second, nobody seemed to notice.

Another example comes from the congressionally-created control board that has been tearing up the city of Washington's minimal self-government. A week before the control board stripped the city's elected school board of almost all its powers, the board's executive director, John Hill, solemnly stated that "There is healthy respect for home rule on the control board. There is also a focus on trying to solve the major problems that the city faces." A year earlier, the chair of the control board, Andrew Brimmer, had just as solemnly said, "We do not plan to replace elected officials in any way."

For the Clintonistas, of course, the dispersal of misinformation, disinformation, and other forms of dissembling long ago reached the level of terminal addiction.

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Like the aforementioned Mr. Hill, they are particularly adept at combining two mutually exclusive thoughts such as we believe in constitutional rights but they are conditional on our convenience, or we believe there are serious moral questions about the death penalty but we will expand its use.

They are also good at saying with a straight face things that simply are not true as, for example, the recent declaration by a Democratic National Committee representative that the firing of the increasingly dubious John Huang was merely a routine seasonal layoff.

Does the person who dreamed up this absurdity feel at all silly or embarrassed? Was she reprimanded by a superior? Or was the formulation proudly designed by George Stephanopoulos and James Carville over a beer in the Whitewater war room?

Most likely, whoever concocted this particular fib felt quite accurately confident that the phrase would disappear from the next day's news even if Mr. Huang didn't. These are people, after all, who agree with William James' view that "What's true is what works," albeit James was talking philosophy and not about saving a presidential butt..

Yet the Clinton people were something before they were Clinton people; they were not spawned by the president and his wife; they merely belong to the same affinity group: boomer America -- land of Wall Street sharks, killer litigators, spin surgeons, and semiotic predators.

And who have we entrusted to keep watch over this destructive mob of mendacious mandarins? None other than a media that shares the same values as those they observe. It is inevitable, therefore, that instead of investigation we get exculpation; and instead of revelation of wrongs, we get their expatiation.

A media that believes those seeking answers to important questions are paranoids, that can't tell the difference between a reasonable hypothesis and a conspiracy theory, which is chronically ill-informed on the subjects about which it so confidently pontificates, and which, in the end, will take a prominent person's perception over the truth any day, is hardly equipped to be the public's surrogate in such matters.

There are, of course, blessed exceptions. Such as Maureen Dowd writing on what Bill Clinton claimed to have learned while shaking hands:

> Elmer Gantry would be impressed with the testimony Mr. Clinton says he gathered in ten minutes of shaking hands: a professor who, thanks to a Bill Clinton research grant, says he will cure Parkinson's disease; a man who thanks to Bill Clinton's family leave law, was able to adopt a baby without his wife losing her job; a dropout who, thanks to a Bill Clinton student loan, will study microbiology, and three breast cancer survivors who, thanks to Bill Clinton research money, hope to see the disease whipped.

A more typical member of the press, however, is E. J. Dionne of the *Washington Post*, who recently wrote a book about how progressives were going to rise again. As the major progressive in the recent presidential race, Ralph Nader tried to contact

> I have been repeatedly impressed by the number of members of the Clinton administration who have assured me with great vigor that something or other is known in an area of social policy which, to the best of my understanding, is not known at all. This seems to me perilous. -- *Pat Moynihan in a 1994 memo to Laura Tyson, chair of the Council of Economic Advisors.*

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Dionne to talk about how progressives were indeed rising with his Green Party campaign. Dionne not only never wrote a single article about Nader and the Greens, he never even returned Nader's phone calls. The lie of silence and omission.

Meanwhile, *Newsweek*'s Tom Rosentiel was actually standing up in front of an audience and declaring that the job of media like his was to "build community" and to provide a map for citizens "to navigate themselves to the future," presumably including finding Clinton's damn bridge.

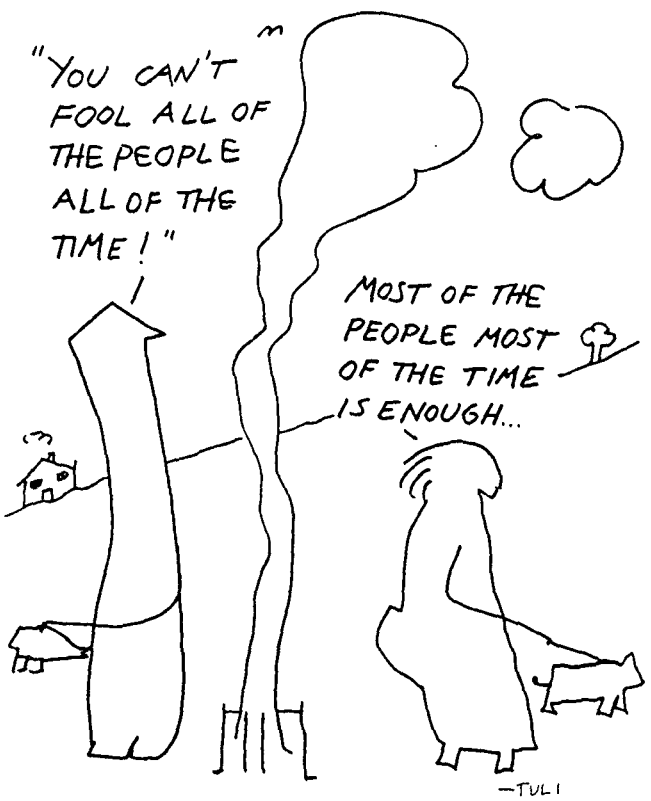
Rosentiel also attacked a favorite target of the archaic press -- the Internet -- claiming that what was lost with it was "the sacred and priestly selection of news."

Well, in the sacred and priestly selection of the news a lot gets lost as well, not the least of which is the fact that publications such as *Newsweek* are staring at impending irrelevancy thanks to the Net. One of the media's favorite topics -- conflict of interest -- suddenly disappears when you start dealing with issues like these.

The old media -- having lost the first battles of cyberspace -- is now engaged in a desperate effort to discredit information from sources other than its own. In a recent example, the *New York Times* devoted two pages to ridiculing the notion that TWA 800 was shot down by friendly fire, citing it as the sort of misinformation to which the Net is prone.

Yet buried in its own article was the admission that a missile "still hasn't been ruled out, though it's now considered the least likely possibility."

In fact, at the time the article was written, there were a variety of hypotheses floating comfortably about the Net, including the potential of a bomb, mechanical malfunction, terrorist missile, or friendly fire. There was even discussion of a stray meteorite or of Star Wars "brilliant pebbles." While some of the discussion was wildly misinformed, there was also thoughtful analysis that went far deeper than anything to be found in the conventional media. In its effort to discredit the Net, the *Times* told its readers none of this but rather gave a rampantly false picture of what was actually happening in cyberspace. Further, the paper never explained what was wrong with considering various hypotheses when the available evidence had produced no answer at all. Implicit in the *Times'* argument was the idea that the public should hold no opinion or receive no information other than that of the conventional media and the government it serves so well.



Attacks such as these are particularly hypocritical when one considers the near total lack of self-criticism by the mainstream press over its almost instantaneous willingness to blame any bomb blast or major catastrophe on Arab terrorism.

As military writer William M. Arkin wrote for Pacific News Service, "The problem is not that a computer network offers an alternative to the information aristocracy. The true crisis is that neither the news media nor the government has enough credibility to be accepted as either truthful or impartial on their own."

When a reporter does speak the truth these days, it can be risky -- even if you are David Brinkley. On election night, Brinkley expressed the view that the president didn't have "a creative bone in his body" and was a bore. The reaction was so negative that a few days later, Brinkley felt compelled to apologize to the President on the air. As *Boston Globe* columnist Mike Barnicle wrote about the incident:

> *Truth is often treated oddly on those rare occasions when it manages to escape from a TV set and land in our lap. Almost always, viewers insist on clarifications, apologies or other verbal contortions in order to explain or expand upon what they've just seen or heard.*
>
> *Maybe because, over the years, we have grown so used to living with lies that we find basic honesty uttered in public to be incredible. And the truth is lies -- half lies, little lies, official lies as well as a large blanket of contrivance and deception -- cover American life.*

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That's why David Brinkley's election night performance was so refreshing. It was simple truth unchained, a totally candid observation let out of the box by a man who has probably grown tired of conducting a hoax that is often falsely labeled as analysis.

Few journalists function these days in their former role of democracy's detectives or the citizens' private investigators. Instead they have become part of a corporate-governmental sedative that keeps citizens from even suspecting, let alone demanding, the right answers.

Nor can the public expect much help from the nation's leading liberals anymore. In ideas and action, that place in politics where things used to happen has closed up shop. As Andrew Sullivan pointed out recently, "liberals spent a decade in the 1980s excoriating the culture of greed that Ronald Reagan allegedly spawned. Do they have no concern about the culture of expediency that Clinton has legitimized -- and will legitimize even further in a second term? "

Apparently not. Environmentalists settle for a few crumbs; Jesse Jackson throws in the towel in return for a cameo appearance here or there; ADA rushes to endorse Clinton for a second term; feminists decry the fate of Anita Hill but fail to say a word on behalf of Paula Jones; and Gary Ackerman defends the welfare bill by claiming that "sometimes in order to make progress and move ahead you have to stand up and do the wrong thing."

One reason the meltdown of integrity within America's mandarin class has proceeded so unimpeded is that so many members of this class have been educated to hold the very notion of truth in contempt.

To them, a single truth, universal values, and the like are all part of the baggage of modernism and the tyrannies that accompanied it.

To an extent, the view is valid and useful, although hardly a secret to anthropologists and others who had long tried to convince fellow academics that the Western canon wasn't the only show on earth.

But modernity's critics turned validity into parody. While definitions of truth indeed varied, all coherent cultures had *some* definition of truth. Further, those groups of humans that managed to commingle had discovered, if not a common definition of truth, at least enough common ground to avoid slaughtering each other.

Instead, the post-modernist liberals put their faith in what Andrew Sullivan describes as "the kind of moral nihilism Clinton has perfected." As Pauline Marie Rosenau writes, "For the skeptical post-modernists, one can never say what one intends with language, [thus] ultimately all textual meaning, all interpretation is indecipherable. ~ Many diverse meanings are possible for any symbol, gesture, word. ~ Language has no direct relationship to the real world; it is, rather, only symbolic."

In a world of multiple and ever multiplying truths, the only truth that ultimately matters is one backed by power -- whether that of propaganda, repression, or the passive consent of a public no longer able to tell what is true and what is false. The ultimate fallacy of the post-modern ideology is that it leads inevitably to government based on lies and force.

The irony of the post-modern myth is that it was supposed to destroy the evils of modernism. But priests of the Western canon have yet to be deposed and it's still business as usual at the Brookings Institution and Council on Foreign Relations. Post-modernism was supposed to liberate multi-culturalsm. Instead it has left the supposedly united colors of diversity equal opportunity victims of corporatism. And thanks to the post-modern idea, the new tyrannies can flourish without even the mild restraint of internal consistency.

We may not be able to stop the government and media from lying to us, but we can at least stop lying to one another. This does not mean pretending a non-existent universality of values and truth. It does, however, mean risking the argument that despite all our differences, there is enough that we share to make a decent country out of it. In the end, it's a matter of either finding that common ground or being common victims of those who don't want us to.

We have had the misfortune to be born into a world with a virtually limitless capacity to deceive us. We can't really change that. What we can change is how we react to it, defend ourselves against it, and find -- with the help of others -- new openings for the truth to seep in. -- *Sam Smith*

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Flotsam & Jetsam

Strictly speaking, you probably shouldn't create a national Green Party in the pool house of a farm in the middle of Virginia hunt country. But a third party that spent less than a penny per vote on its presidential campaign, has no fixed address and whose candidate wouldn't even support its platform, is not about to get uptight about minor matters of ambiance.

It wasn't the first time the farm had been used for politics: Jack Kennedy retreated there from the more public places of Camelot. But in the minds of many on a recent weekend, it seemed entirely likely that what was happening far surpassed such an incidental contribution to history. After all, this time the farm was not merely hosting a national icon, but giving birth to a national idea.

Years after the European Greens created a structure for the most important new progressive political idea since the social welfare state, representatives from some 30 state Green parties came not just to join together, not just to offer a few new policies, but to declare the old liberal-conservative dichotomy irrelevant, tautological and just plain dead.

That's a lot to do in one weekend. Yet the participants seemed neither particularly driven nor harried. A stranger might even have imagined that they had come in triumph. They clearly viewed the one percent of the national vote their candidate Ralph Nader received not as the media had -- statistically insignificant -- but with the boundless pleasure of parents regarding a new baby. They transformed the tiny, fragile specifics before them into an infinity of hope and dreams.

Further, in state after state, the Greens had gotten on the ballot by beating down arcane, dupoloistic rules that left voters to choose only between two deeply defective parties. And despite appearing on just 21 state ballots, the Greens had beaten the Libertarians, the latter's full slate and full pocketbook notwithstanding. In some places, such as DC, Seattle, Portland and San Francisco, Nader even ran ahead of Perot and in Madison, WI, he had come in second.

I had been skeptical of the enterprise from the start. I had seen the Peace & Freedom Party start at the top and end up nowhere. I had been in the third party business for more than a quarter or a century and could see every down side. I knew enough about Nader to realize that he and the Greens would not be a perfect match. I believed the Greens should start where their hearts were -- in the community -- and build out from there.

I was wrong -- not because my concerns were unwarranted, but because they were far outweighed by other things. In fact, Nader did about as poorly in the vote count as I expected. What I had not expected was that it wouldn't matter much at all. Where I had foreseen defeat others had found victory.

Those such as John Rensenbrink, Tony Affigne, Linda Martin, Dee Berry and Tom Linzey, who saw the Nader campaign as the grease to slide the Greens into national politics, were more than confirmed. Those Nader associates such as Rob Hager who perceived the synergy-in-waiting proved more than prescient. Those who knew this was the time to seize were more than wise.

In theory it shouldn't have worked at all. The Nader campaign functioned without paid staffers, pollsters, consultants and focus groups. A national clearinghouse led by Linda Martin was staffed entirely by volunteers. When reporters asked Nader whether he supported the Green platform, his response was, "Which one?" You could, in fact, take your pick. The media gave the Greens no quarter. Clinton and Dole spent one thousand times as much per vote as Nader. And most Americans didn't even know what a Green was.

In a strange way, though, Nader and the Greens needed each other. For all his good works, Nader's utopia never had seemed to stretch much beyond tedious regulatory reform. The Greens, on the other hand, were far more likely to confront bulldozers in a forest than the bullies in the corporations that owned the forest. In combination, Nader and the Greens could address both cause and effect.

The symbiosis changed both parties. At the Middleburg conference, about half of the attendees -- people in key positions in state parties -- had joined the Greens because of Nader. They were younger and less granolesque than the long-time Greens present. A representative from New Jersey broke into the discussion with a cry of "Yo!" and a young Maine delegate moderating a session actually told some back-of-the-hall conversationalists to "shut up." To be sure there were familiar Green touches -- a delegate demanding a "vibes check" to make sure that no one was feeling undue angst about process, and another who peremptorily decided we should spend our stretch break doing ti-chi. But it was clear that the Nader effort was even changing the internal language of the Greens, not to mention providing us with enough lawyers to set up regional legal aid networks to deal with electoral problems.

As for Nader, he seemed to have changed as well. He had started the campaign with numerous conditions -- not the least of which was his refusal to take direct campaign funds. These made the match seem about as exciting as dating the chair of Antioch's anti-sexual harassment task force. But as state after state developed

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its own Nader campaign and as the underlying decency and logic of the Green idea insinuated itself even amongst the capos of the Nader operation, their leader reached the point that he would report to the Middleburg crowd that when asked by reporters about tree-hugging he would say that there were a lot worst things to hug -- like Clinton or Dole. Nader also volunteered to help continue to take the Green message across the land and even displayed more than a casual interest in getting involved in his home state Connecticut politics.

There is an increasing inevitability to Green politics. Consider some recent survey results showing the percent of Americans who believe:

☑ That government is crooked: 51%.

☑ That public officials don't care what people think: 66%

☑ That government is run by a few big interests: 79%

☑ That people have no say in what the government does: 55%

☑ That the country is improving as a nation: 10%.

☑ That the country is in a decline: over half.

Which political party agrees with a majority of voters on such issues? Not the Republicans or the Democrats, but the Green Party. On such fundamental matters, it is the Greens who are in the mainstream.

Americans basically have two political choices: they either move in a green direction or they can go the authoritarian, corporatist route. If they choose the latter, they can expect to see a steady degradation of their wages, freedom, environment and security.

Corporatism is an extreme form of capitalism in which the largest businesses direct the policy of a nation (or, increasingly, of nations). Every government institution (including the military, police, and legislature) and every natural resource is turned to its purposes. Corporatism is not free enterprise; it is not commercialism; it is not entrepreneurial. It is manipulative, corrupting, exploitive and coercive. It is anti-democratic, anti-competitive, anti-community and anti-ecological. Its roots are in fascist Italy; its contemporary expression is Singapore. And its antithesis is not the Republican or Democratic parties that have jointly nourished it, but the Green movement.

The liberal-conservative spectrum has congealed into an indistinguishable puddle of mindless glop. The Republican and the Democratic parties are brain dead -- kept breathing only by the life support system of corporate funding. No one knows what the Reform Party wants, and Libertarians mainly want to make sure nobody gets what they already have. The Greens offer the only philosophy that coherently integrates freedom and decency. Theirs is the only philosophy that can leave citizens, their communities, and the planet better off ten years from now then they are today.

Stripped to its essence the Greens have three major concerns: people, their places, and the planet. And three tools to foster and protect them: democracy, fairness, and ecological wisdom. It is the politics not of institutions but of communities, not of systems but of people, not of laws and regulations but of common sense, common decency and common ground.

THE MANDATE

If 632,510 Clinton voters in just eleven states had changed their minds, Dole would have won in the electoral college -- a shift of less one percent.

DC MATH

The fact is that our trade-deficit increase is decreasing at a fairly impressive rate -- Mickey Kantor

There is, however, no progressive movement so small that it can not be divided in two, and the Greens have suffered the plague of factionalism for more than a decade. In one sense, the Middleburg meeting represented a triumph over this internal battle between those who wanted the Greens to be the avant garde movement of environmentalism and those who wanted to convert a whole nation to their cause. For years, efforts to move in an electoral direction have been stymied by the would-be eco-elite.

Such struggles are not new, The Euro-Greens and other progressive movements have experienced them. But what may be new and worth noting is the patience and effort that has gone into trying not to have the schism any worse than it need be. It looks as if the Greens may actually survive their past.

There was one other thing about the Middleburg meeting that didn't occur to me until later. People from thirty states, many of whom had never met previously, came together and formed a union and a plan. They had created an important new political option for America. Yet only after it was over, did I notice something unusual: *nobody* had really run the conference. The planning committee had been so unobtrusive it was invisible, the individual sessions were moderated by a rotating squad of volunteers, and matters were discussed according to the unspoken rules of Green considerate anarchy.

It was clear in retrospect that nobody *had* been in charge. Yet it had happened anyway. And if that's not a new paradigm for America, then what is? -- *Sam Smith*

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Feedback

In defense of communitarians

In the last issue, Tom Martin attacked communitarianism. David Spero didn't like it: As a radical who has been "sucked in by the siren song of communitarianism," I avidly read Thomas Martin's attack piece. Like any good radical, I appreciate challenges to my ideas and preconceptions. Unfortunately, Martin's essay is so disjointed and self-contradictory that instead of challenged, I felt sad. If this is the best thinking progressives can develop, the left is in more trouble than we thought. On the bright side, his criticism inadvertently highlights why communitarianism in the right hands greatly strengthens those working for sustainability and democracy.

Martin attacks communitarianism because "the Gingrich generation adopted [its] agenda, and if that doesn't make you suspicious, nothing will." In the very next paragraph, he zings communitarians for being insufficiently devolutionist, for "not questioning the centralized paternal state." Well, devolution is pure Gingrich -- moving power from the liberal federal government, to the more conservative state governments. Communitarians point out the flaw in this pseudo-decentralization, that states, counties and large cities are as far removed from people's lives as are the feds. They call for power to devolve as much as possible to the neighborhood level, where people know each other. And most agree that you need a federal government setting standards and limits to avoid the corruption and abuse such decentralism will invite.

Later, Martin scoffs at the C-tarians as an academic elite divorced from the grassroots. Then he attacks C-tarian ideas such as balancing individual rights with responsibilities by citing (unnamed) "ecological philosophers," who have "tentatively concluded that rights and responsibilities as currently defined make no senses in a holistic, interconnected world." Now, there's a down-to-earth refutation! So different from those head-in-the-clouds academes! "Can we even differentiate clearly between 'individual' and 'society'?" Martin asks. Maybe he can't, but most people I meet in the laundromat can, even in Martin's "post-modern and increasingly post-Western society."

It's true that communitarianism centers in the universities. More an intellectual than a mass movement now, their ideas are spreading and being used by activists all over the country. An article by Donovan Rypkema in the Summer 1993 issue of "The Responsive Community," destroys the economic thinking of the "property rights" movement, the right-wing effort to weaken or eliminate environmental restrictions on property use. Rypkema's arguments -- basically, that the value of property is socially created, so society has a right to rationalize its use -- has been successfully wielded by Green activists, including me. The same issue contains articles on corporate responsibility, community policing, and health-care reform -- critical issues often wailed about, but rarely effectively addressed by the left..

Strangely, Martin devotes about half his piece to criticism of the "cyber-communitarians," those who believe in the benefits of on-line communities' replacing geographic ones. The cyberites can hardly be considered intellectual partners of the communitarians, who believe in physical, not virtual community. I can personally attest that neither Professor Etzioni nor Roger Conner, Director of the American Alliance for Rights and Responsibilities, knew how to use e-mail until about a year ago. I will not defend cyber-communitarianism; I don't believe in it. I have met nice people from around the world on-line, but I'm not going to ask them to watch my kids while I go to work. But these guys have nothing to do with mainstream communitarianism.

Near the end of this sloppy piece, Martin attacks Amitai Etzioni and others for insisting on common values, that "must arise from social consensus, [not] be imposed from above" and "that must be judged by external and overriding criteria based on shared human experience."

"Any philosophy that believes in external and overriding criteria," says Martin, "is faced with the question of who gets to identify and interpret those criteria. And we are back where we started, with a ruling elite." Martin quoted the part about arising from social consensus, but apparently he forgot to read it first.

Martin seems blissfully clueless that by attacking the idea of common values, he lines up with the extremist libertarian ideology of the secular right, which insists that only the market should decide what values are promoted and by what limits people should abide. If he doesn't want communities setting standards, who does he think should set them? Or should we do without them? These alternatives equate exactly to letting the corporations set the standards.

The progressive power of communitarianism is precisely that it gives a rational basis for opposing corporate libertarianism. Much of the left, especially the 60's generation, can't seem to comprehend that unlimited freedom is a double-edged sword, and we're the ones getting cut most of the time. Martin says, without evidence, that the C-tarian goal is "regimentation and control for the sake of greater profits." Has he noticed that profits are soaring right now without any regimentation, or increasingly, without social control of any kind?

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There are two kinds of anarchy. The libertarian purports to get rid of all state power and put no limits on individual freedom -- with resulting complete control by the economically powerful. The communitarian acknowledges powers, but these are wielded to the greatest possible degree at the community level, where people know each other. Those, like Martin, who line up with the libertarians are on the wrong side. Why shouldn't companies run away to Malaysia? By what legal, political, economic, or moral principle do you mean to hold them? Only the argument from community, that companies and everyone in them have responsibilities to the people with whom they interact and live, holds any promise for moderating corporate behavior. Building community is also the only way to meet effectively the daily needs of individuals without breaking the global resource bank through over-consumption.

Communitarian organizing does in fact work on a grassroots level. The most visible expression is neighborhood safety patrols. What can be more radical than communities taking the power and responsibility to maintain safety and establish norms of behavior for themselves, instead of leaving it to the state to monitor? Which is better for a neighborhood's youth: to be observed by their neighbors or by the police? A newer initiative is establishing community justice, where neighborhood groups get involved in sentencing and supervision of offenders, as well as in patrolling their streets.

I will be the first to admit that the communitarian movement, as presently constituted, pays insufficient attention to questions of power. I am a fellow-traveler, not a card-carrying member, because Etzioni and other leaders, while glorifying the idea of community, seem unwilling to "address the economic and technological forces weakening and dissolving real communities." But this failure does not equate to endorsing a corporate agenda, as Martin claims. To have strong communities requires community-based economies; because people's first loyalty has got to be where their money comes from. I have found no one who truly sees how to build such economies today, but at least neighborhood activists are working on it, and communitarians are giving them intellectual support. Communitarianism, for all its failings, contains something people vitally need: an ideology that can brace us to contest the total dominance of market forces and their increasing deconstruction of our lives.

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